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ON THE TRAINING OF PARENTS

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BY

ERNEST HAMLIN ABBOTT

"And they shall live with their children."

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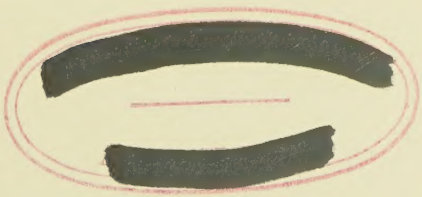

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No man has the right to dedicate to another what is not his own. All that is mine in this little book is its infelicities. These I dedicate to oblivion. The rest belongs to those two women from whom I, as son and as husband, have learned all that I know of the training of parents.

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ON THE TRAINING OF PARENTS

I

SPASM AND HABIT

A VOICE like a knife cut the still, warm air. "Now you just go right down and get that canned salmon." I turned my head and saw a little girl, in a fluffy dress with a skirt like a parachute, standing in the midst of the long grass. She was evidently frightened and hesitating. There was a whimper and a whining protest. A young woman in a wrapper, with a menacing switch in her hand, was advancing. Her voice grew sharper: "You do what I say, quick, or I'll whip you good!" The child beat a retreat toward me; then timidly stood her ground. "It's so far!" she wailed. The enemy again approached; but the

little feet of the child were nimble enough to keep her at a safe distance. "If you don't hurry, I'll whip you anyway." Fear of the switch was evidently mastering the dislike of the task. The little girl burst out crying, turned down the dusty road, and disappeared in the direction of the village.

That incident was the result of government by collision. If that mother had any principle at all, it might be expressed thus: Wait till the child does wrong, then collide with her. Of course none of us would deliberately collide in just this fashion. We should not be so vulgar. When we have an altercation with a child, we choose less publicity and have some regard for refinement of phrase. Perhaps, too, we ordinarily avoid altercation entirely except concerning some grave matter. We should prefer to do without canned salmon rather than exhibit our impotence and our temper before the neighbors. When, however, we have the child in seclusion at our mercy, are we deterred from trying the collision

method by any considerations of principle? If not, we belong to the same school of parents as the young woman in a wrapper. The only difference is that we have not her courage of conviction — or of indolence.

Now, those who believe in government by collision need read no further; for I shall assume that such government is only just better than no government at all, and that, if we fall into its methods, we do so by accident or because of the frailty of our temper; that every altercation with a child is a confession of weakness; and that our principal task is to train ourselves so that we may be able to govern a child without colliding with him. Of course, in the training of children, as in managing a railway, it may sometimes be necessary to occasion a disaster in order to avoid a great catastrophe. If a freight car is running wild down a grade, it is better to throw it off the track than to allow it to smash a loaded passenger train. So it may sometimes be better to let a child collide with you, rather than

have him collide with the community. But in both cases it is better to have the collision well planned, to recognize it as a disaster, though the lesser of two possible ones, and, best of all, to prevent any occasion of resorting to destructive measures.

The only alternative I know to government by collision is government by habit. To show what I mean, may I cite an instance in contrast to the episode of the switch and the canned salmon? That same summer a small boy, six years old, was playing with his blocks. His mother in the next room suddenly realized that she had not ordered the fruit that was needed for the household. "Max!" she called. Now Max is no prig, but he had learned that he was expected to come when called; so, with an injunction to his playmates not to disturb the bridge he was building, he appeared at the doorway. "What is it?" (He ought to have said, "Yes, mamma;" but, as I have

remarked, Max is thoroughly human.) "I want you to do an errand for me — something you've never done before. I want you to go to the grocery and get six oranges." Max started off. "Wait a moment. You've never gone alone on such a long errand before. Do you believe you can do it quickly, and not dawdle?" Max thought he could, and in fact did the errand as promptly as could be expected. He had been accustomed to obedience; in addition, he had become accustomed to accepting some measure of responsibility. The mother controlled him, not by violence, but by habit. The occurrence was the result of a long process, and became in turn a cause of future occurrences of similar character. Reduced to its simplest terms, then, the process of training children is the process of forming habits.

The earliest habits are physical. The whole duty of man during the first few weeks of his existence consists in feed-

ing and sleeping regularly; and most of the rights of man during that period consist in being let alone. Listen to the eminent French psychologist, Th. Ribot: "The new-born infant is a spinal being, with an unformed, diffluent brain, composed largely of water. Reflex life itself is not complete in him, and the cortico-motor system only hinted at; the sensory centres are undifferentiated, the associational systems remain isolated, for a long time after birth." Does n't it make you shudder to think of dandling such a creature as that on a hard-gaited knee? Does not that "unformed, diffluent brain, composed largely of water," plead to be let alone? Yet the impulse of most parents when they encounter their new possession is to do something to it, — to take it up, to carry it about, and, as soon as its eyes are really open, to try and show it things, to evoke from it some kind of human expression. It seems as if we were all beset by a doubt that our offspring

is really a creature of our own kind, and that we were bound to make it establish, by some proof, its right to a place at the top of creation. Now, the instincts of the infant are all in other directions. Yielding to these, the mite seems to be utterly indifferent to the honors of its station in animal life, and even to the attention it receives. It wants to cry occasionally, to feed periodically, and to sleep a great deal. And, in spite of our experience, we are wrong, and the diminutive thing, with a cortico-motor system only hinted at, with sensory centres undifferentiated, and with the extraordinary disadvantage of having completely isolated associational centres, is right. The first habits, therefore, which the parents have to form in the training of their child are their own; and the most important of these is the habit of non-interference, which is another name for the habit of self-restraint. Fortunately, we parents can at the outset devote our attention chiefly

to this for several months. If we wish to avoid, in later years, the necessity for resorting to government by spasm, and to establish instead government by habit, we do not have to begin by experimenting on a helpless child; we can begin, fortunately, by experimenting on ourselves.

It is during this period that we have the best chance of learning the difference between governing children and interfering with them; for though that midget will not thrive under interference, he will thrive under government. He does not need to be told what to do, but he does depend on us to teach him when to do it. While, therefore, we are forming in ourselves the habit of non-interference, we are also forming in him the habit of regularity. If we begin that way, we save both him and ourselves a great deal of trouble.

One mother, for instance, when she hears her baby cry, runs to him, picks him up, dances him up and down, offers

him food, dangles a bell in front of him, talks to him, takes him to the window, tries every imaginable device to quiet him. "It 's wicked, I think," says she, "to try to stifle my maternal instincts. The poor little dear! how could I be so cruel as not to respond to his cry for me?" She is assuming several things. She assumes, first, that the baby is crying for her, whereas he is probably crying because he needs the exercise. That is the only way he can expand his lungs. When he cries because of pain, or anger, or nervous irritability, the cry will be unmistakable; and the response ought to be, not a wild series of spasms, but an intelligent treatment of the cause. She assumes, in the second place, that the impulse to rid herself of the annoyance of hearing the cry is a maternal instinct. If that were so, a lot of gruff old bachelors on railway trains are frequently moved by maternal instinct. The maternal instinct, in fact, is something quite

different — it is the instinct of care, watchfulness, nurture, and it does not call for spasms. In the third place, she assumes that it would be cruel not to experiment with her child — at least so it appears; for what she does is to try in quick succession a series of experiments, no one of which is continued long enough to be of any value, and all of which, as she might easily learn, have been proved to be of no permanent value in producing placid, contented babies.

The other mother, when she hears the cry, listens. If it is a cry of pain, she knows it in an instant. It is amazing how quickly a mother learns that language. It is a mystery to most men, though even to them not unsearchable. Physicians, after experience in children's wards, understand it; and even a father, if he is patient, can acquire a moderate knowledge of it. But a mother, or even a nurse, if she is moved by a genuine maternal instinct and not by a selfish

desire for her own comfort, is almost an adept at the start. At the cry of pain, that mother in a moment is looking for the misplaced pin, or rearranging the irritating bit of clothing, or remedying the uncomfortable position, or searching for a more hidden cause. If it is a cry of irritability, she blames herself for having rocked the child a few moments before, and steels herself against repeating the indulgence. If it is a cry of hunger, she looks at the clock to see if it is the hour for another feeding. If it is just "plain cry," she smiles, for she knows that he is doing that in lieu of playing baseball or riding horseback. When it is meal-time, she, exercising the discretion which he is not always able to exercise for himself, gently withdraws the food supply when he has had all that is good for him. And when it is time for him to go to sleep, she arranges him comfortably in his crib, darkens the room, and leaves him. If then he emits another "plain cry," she is not

disturbed. He has as much a right to cry as he has to sleep. If she lets him go to sleep in her arms, for the love of feeling him there, she will not complain later, when it is more inconvenient, if he remonstrates against going to sleep in any other way. She will know that in that respect, as in respect to his regular feeding, she has governed him by habit. Either she will have to pay the penalty of having established in her kingdom an inconvenient law, or else she will have to inflict upon him, as well as herself, the penalty of establishing later, and at greater cost, another and more convenient custom which might just as well have been established in the first place. This penalty may involve a collision — though possibly a mild one. Even in that case, however, in the very difficulty of supplanting an old custom by a new one, she will have evidence of the strength of her government by habit.

There is no reason why regularity once

established should not become for all future years a routine. We all know how hard it is to break up a bad habit. Happily, it is just as hard to break up a good one. The difference between the child who teases for every new variety of food on the table, pushes away the dishes that are set before him, whines when he is told it is bedtime, eats and goes to sleep only after much coaxing, and the child who accepts his food and his hours for sleep as a matter of course, as he accepts the house he lives in, is simply the difference between a bad habit and a good one. It is no easier to change the one habit than it is the other. After a child has learned to get his food and go to bed with whining and teasing, it is very difficult for him to learn to eat and sleep in any other fashion; it is equally difficult for a child who has learned to eat and enjoy food adapted to him, and to go to bed at a suitable hour, to understand why all sorts of strange decoctions should be offered to him, and why he should not

get undressed when his bedtime comes. Of course the spirit of adventure, which is strong in most normal children, will lead them sometimes to sample some things that they see their elders — or, for that matter, the animals — eating; and to race about the halls, exploring the domain of the dark, after they are supposed to be asleep; but even this spirit of adventure, which sometimes brings discouragement to the mother, is a tribute to regular life; and it is denied to those children whose whole life consists in a series of parental experiments. The little lad who at a children's party declines the sweetmeats is no angel. Nor is his companion who grabs the dainties an imp. They are both, like the rest of us, creatures of habit. The theory of total depravity, by which our forefathers explained the unpleasant doings of youngsters, is, I have concluded, a doctrine which parents devised in order to shift the burden of their own failures to the shoulders of their offspring.

This practice of regularity in the physical care of children [1] will lay the foundation, not only of health and contentment, but also of moral discipline. When we have eliminated the opportunities for collision with our children at meal-times and bedtime, we are well on our way toward eliminating government by collision altogether. The quiet exercise of authority involved in carrying out a simple regimen of diet and of rest will almost automatically extend to other matters. The most difficult part of this exercise of authority will be overcome when the parent learns self-restraint. Not to run to a child

[1] For directions in this matter I know of no book to compare with Dr. L. Emmett Holt's *The Care and Feeding of Children*, published by D. Appleton & Co. Intelligently followed by a mother, with due regard to the individual peculiarities of the children under her care, the system outlined in that volume will save the mother an enormous amount of energy and worry and the child a great deal of injustice. It ought to arrive in every household with the first-born baby, or, better, a few weeks in advance. The physician who sees that it does, in every family he attends, will win a wealth of gratitude and confidence. In my own household it came that way. As a supplement, not a substitute, I also recommend Dr. Emelyn L. Coolidge's *The Mother's Manual* (A. S. Barnes & Co.).

every time he cries is the beginning of learning not to yield to a child every time he wants something. In many cases authority is thus exercised by doing nothing. The mother, for example, has left the baby creeping about alone in his nursery. She has left him a ball and two or three blocks with which he can experiment, and another ball hanging from a cord within his reach which he can swing to and fro. He is learning that the ball is soft and can roll, that the blocks are hard and cannot roll, and that the pendulum swings regularly. He is as well occupied in his work as the mother is in hers. Suddenly she hears a cry of vexation. If it continues, she steps to the door to see what has happened. He has raised himself up by the window and is trying to reach the tassel at the end of the cord on the window-shade, and finds it above his outstretched hands. She might go to the window, draw down the shade, and, holding it firm, let him play with the cord till he tires; but

she knows that it would be inconvenient to have him continually playing with the window-shade in the house, and she does not want him to begin. She might then take him up and distract his attention till he forgets. But she knows that if she does this once, she will be called upon to do it again. So she shakes her head and says "No," which she has taught him to understand, and, after making sure that he is in no danger of a fall, leaves him and returns to her work. By doing nothing she has done what for the time being is the hardest thing. As she closes the door she hears another wail of vexation, but she does not interfere. She has exercised her authority simply by exercising self-restraint.

It all depends on what we want our children to be whether we employ the method of spasm or the method of self-restraint. Of course those of us who think pertness in a child is a virtue, who regard a fit of teasing as "smart" or "cunning," who

enjoy the exhilaration of encountering a child as an adversary and breaking down his opposition, can develop in children habitual pertness, teasing, and disobedience with the utmost ease. It requires, however, no especial genius to avoid these qualities. Other traits, it may be, require something like genius — something at least beyond persistence and self-restraint — to create; but to provide children with a contented acquiescence in a regular life and an habitual disposition to obedience requires of the parents no qualities of mind which are not common to all of us mortals.

II

THE WILL AND THE WAY

PARENTS regard their children with all sorts of feelings, with love of course, with indulgence, with amusement, and even, so it is said, with self-complacency and admiration; but it sometimes seems as if very few regard them with respect. No one who respects another will lie to him, or visit him with empty threats, or make to him vain promises; yet fathers and mothers in all parts of the country are at this moment lying to their children, threatening them with punishments they do not mean to inflict, and making promises they do not intend to fulfill. The faith of a child ought to be proverbial. It is the only substance of things hoped for which many children ever get. I sometimes wonder if it is really just to lay the Fifth Commandment upon all American chil-

dren. Somehow, there seems to be something reciprocal implied in it. If that commandment is of universal application, it can be considered so, I imagine, only on the ground that it states a duty owed ultimately not to the parents but to the Almighty. Certainly that parent who does not respect his children has no personal claim upon their honor.

What I mean by respect for a child I can perhaps explain best by an instance. Marshall, aged seven, had yielded to temptation in the form of a preserved pear. Instead of putting the temptation behind him, he had put it within him; and he had been caught. The maternal court decided that a fair equivalent for this pear was a week of desserts. For two days the culprit sat inactive at the close of dinner while his comrades ate with relish their portions of pudding. Then unexpectedly came an invitation to dinner from a friend. On the return homeward an aunt remarked, "I noticed that Mar-

shall ate dessert with the others." "Yes," replied his mother, "I think he must have forgotten. I noticed it too, but I did not speak to him because there was no expectation of this treat when the punishment was determined upon. Besides, I do not think it would have been just to add to his punishment by humiliating him before the others."

In this case respect for the youthful Marshall meant, first, attributing the failure to observe the rule to something besides deliberate intent; second, recognizing that he was to be treated not merely with severity, but also with justice; and, third, appreciating the individuality of the child, which included special sensitiveness to the attention and opinion of others. The very fact that Marshall was accustomed to regularity of discipline, to invariableness in punishment, and even to ridicule of vanity or silliness, made it possible for his mother to do something that smacked of irregularity and of vari-

ableness, and to save him from unnecessary abasement. Just because she had a rule which she habitually followed, she could break it. She could not have broken it if she had not had it. The effectiveness of this act of omission lay in the very fact that it was an exception. It was a case in which fairness to the boy depended upon inconsistency. This only illustrates the truth that in dealing with a child you may violate any principle so long as you keep your respect for the child inviolate. And the secret of respect for a child lies in regarding him as a human being.

The limitation of the devotee of "child study," the scientific investigator of "child nature," the observer of "the child mind," is that he cannot regard a child as a human being. In other words, his limitation consists in being too broad. He observes individuals only for the sake of disregarding their individuality. He is busy establishing some general laws of childhood. He must choose to know nothing of children

that he may know the Child. As soon as he begins to respect an individual child he becomes personal and biased; and as soon as he becomes personal and biased he ceases to be scientific. A good mother, on the other hand, is good just because of her prejudices. She knows so much about her child that her testimony is scientifically worthless. In everything the child does she sees something he, and not another child has done before; and she makes her judgments accordingly. And it is just because her observations would be vicious in a table of statistics that they are the best possible basis for conduct. In other words, she is dealing, not with a subject, a cadaver, so to speak, that can be classified, but with a live being that for her purposes belongs in a class by himself. That is what I mean by respecting a child.

It is here that the teacher and the parent are at odds. The teacher is dealing with childhood, the parent is dealing with Dick-hood or Mary-hood. The teacher is

engaged chiefly in providing each child with the equipment that belongs by right to all civilized children; the parent, on the other hand, is bound to bring each child to his, and not another's, highest development. The teacher is responsible for the school or the class; the parent, for the boy or girl. The difference in point of view makes the difference in duty. It was from the parental point of view that the ancient sage wrote his proverb — "Train up a child in the way he should go." He was not thinking of the way of universal obligation, for what he really said was, "Train up a child in the way he [that particular individual] is to go;" in other words, prepare him for the kind of life for which he is fitted. In order to do this, one must have regard for that child's temperament, his distinctive traits.

The severest test of our respect for a child comes when we find his will conflicting with ours. It is easy enough to overbear a child's will; it is difficult to

educate it. The hardest task of a parent is to retain respect for a child while administering a spanking. It is easy to roll out the cant saying, "I spank you because I love you," but it is very difficult to bring one's self into that frame of mind in which it would be the mere truth to say, "I spank you because I respect you." Anybody, by simply being persistent, can thwart a child; and any one with the ordinary strength of an adult can beat him; but no one who is unwilling to do him the courtesy of regarding him as an individual can master and direct a child, or really punish him.

Not long ago I was traveling in a day coach. In front of me were a man, a woman, and a small boy of about five years. The woman was the dominant member of the group. Her face, with its thin, compressed lips and its hard gray eyes, had a look of indolent selfishness with a suggestion of latent high temper. The man seemed rather dull, weak, and

unhappy. The boy had the rotund, insensitive countenance of his father; but he had not yet lost interest in life. He was no more restless than a boy of his age ought to be. When his mother found his movements disturbing, she darted a rebuke at him. For the moment he sat still or moved out of the way. Finally he edged out into the aisle. The woman made a pretense of ordering him back into the seat. The boy, evidently realizing that his mother, since she was now put to no inconvenience by him, had no intention of enforcing her command, remained passively where he was. When his mother's attention was distracted, he made use of his freedom to get a little mild gymnastic exercise. The train as it drew up to a station jerkily stopped. The lurch of the car threw the boy backward on the floor. Stunned for but an instant, the little lad sent forth a wail. Some of the passengers turned around; others started forward to the child. The woman was obviously annoyed

by the disturbance. Before the father had fairly picked him up, she seized the child, roughly brushed off his clothes, and set him violently down on the seat. "You're a bad boy." She spat the words out at him and shook him. She turned to her husband: "I told him not to stand there." The man was silenced before his dull wits allowed him the chance to speak. "Now," to the boy, "stop your crying." The youngster could not repress his sobs; he was still somewhat dazed. The man gently rubbed the back of the lad's head. The woman glanced at the spectators. She must have noticed that her method of avoiding a scene was not altogether successful. She leaned toward the boy. "Did you hurt yourself?" she asked, and took him into her lap. He let his head fall indifferently on the woman's shoulder. Her tardy and rather formal caresses aroused no response. She put him back on the seat, less ungently than before. "Now will you be good?"

If any but the fool is ever tempted to doubt the existence of God, it is when he reflects that children are intrusted to the mercy of such women as this. None of us is of her breed. We do not like her coarseness. We should never allow ourselves to make the mistake she made — of being found out. She was too frank with her emotions. She had not the skill to conceal the springs of her conduct. What difference, at bottom, however, is there between her and us when we are governed, in disciplining a child, by the degree of our own displeasure? Every one of us has been, on occasions, at heart as incompetent as this vulgar female. We have all of us judged children, at one time and another, by their conformity to our will. A very good woman it was, of the straitest New England doctrines, who sent a boy supperless to bed because, while putting on his overcoat, he accidentally toppled over and smashed a prized vase. That boy is now a man gray

with years and laden with honors; but to this day he has not forgotten the fact that he was made to suffer, not for his own fault, but for his aunt's disappointment.

The only thing that will free us from the futile way of the ogreish woman on the railway car and the austere Puritan lady is an abiding respect for our children. This will save us from attributing to our children our own willfulness. To be authoritative with children is something else besides being opinionated. The opinionated may compel obedience; but only the authoritative secure it. And even the opinionated find obedience not easy of compulsion. When caprice assumes command, I have a sly conviction that disobedience becomes a virtue. Preliminary to teaching children how to obey is the process of learning how to command. When a child is intransigent, it is worth while to consider whether it is not he that is administering a rebuke.

Sometimes resistance to even rightful

authority is not as depraved as we, who do not fancy being resisted, delude ourselves into thinking. There comes the time when any child will exult at the discovery that he is a being apart. He naturally wants to measure his will, and his mother's or his father's will is the handiest standard of comparison. A test of that sort is sometimes disconcerting. A five-year-old, too much given to sliding down from his chair at meal-time, was warned by his father that whenever in the future he should leave his chair, he should not be allowed to return to the table. Soon afterwards the boy disappeared from his place. He had evidently renewed his slippery ways, and had made up his mind to lurk beneath the table and await results. Intent upon the enforcement of the decree, his father said sternly, "You may be excused." Forthwith a head of tousled hair was thrust above the level of the table. "But I did n't leave my chair." Sure enough, there he lay prone across the seat,

like a bag of meal on an ass's back. His father had to find what scant refuge he could in the permissive form of his sentence of dismissal. The lad's wits had won a victory for his will. Those who enter such an engagement without reconnoitring must accept the risk, and, if they wish to preserve the advantage of a commanding position, must abide by the results of any such skirmish. To turn it into a battle of wills is to commit the blunder of underestimating their opponent's strength. A child's will is not a fragile thing. It is not "broken" when it is overcome by another will reinforced by physical strength. An old lady of Maine, now gone to her own place, — which I venture to say is not far from that of Luther and Knox and Jonathan Edwards, — once told me how, when a small girl, she had had her will broken; she recounted the passionate resistance, the screaming protestation, the convulsive and futile rage exhausted only by hours of kicking and

pounding the floor, and her final capitulation, announced by her picking up the toy which, in defiance of her father's order, she had at first refused to touch. She gloried in this Spartan training, and deplored the lack of it in the present degenerate generation. It was this same old lady, with the "broken" will, who, rejecting all advances, stanchly maintained her side in a family feud to, I believe, her dying day. Her will, it is plain, had not even been cracked; it showed not so much as a suture; neither had it been trained. The only treatment it had received had been one of contumely. The old lady was not exactly to blame for the outcome.

If we respect a child's will, we shall give it a chance to operate. We do not thereby surrender a pea's weight of authority. A certain young mother, let us say, believes that there is a sort of unselfishness that has no part in love: she will not relieve her children of effort and responsibility.

One of her brood, a lad of seven, with a touch of dreaminess in his mobile face, with impatience of the material restraints of time and space, with a will of his own that is the harder to direct because it is seldom aggressive, is engaged in propelling a vast tow of block barges along the river that winds across the nursery floor. Of his companions, one is umpiring a game of football between teams of leaden soldiers, and the other is constructing a fearsome dungeon ten blocks deep. At the door appears Authority. "It is now four o'clock," she announces. "At a quarter past four I want to have all the blocks and toys put away." The football umpire and the dungeon-builder, sniffing a prospective treat, bring their operations to an abrupt close. The lad of dreams listens abstractedly, and then turns with great puffing and snorting to his labors of navigation. Inattention? Partly; but partly, too, a deliberate choice of present pleasure and a willful rejection of the

words of authority. Ten, eleven, twelve minutes pass. Again sounds the authoritative voice. "In three minutes it will be a quarter past four. I shall want you then to begin to wash and dress for a drive. Eric, I am afraid you won't be able to go with us; your blocks are not put away." She might, of course, justly tell him then and there that he will not be allowed to go; she chooses, however, the better way, and lets him wrestle with the situation. "You had better not stop to cry," she warns him; "there is no time to waste." In fractious misery he hurriedly begins his belated task. His will, so far from being broken or weakened, is actually stiffened; but it is now enlisted on the side of authority. The others — not a whit more virtuous, by the way, but only more sagacious — are half dressed before he has put his blocks in order. If he fails to overtake them, he will stand disconsolate, abject, perhaps tempestuous, and watch them depart. He has had his way, but he

has won no victory; he has simply learned the cost of willfulness. If he succeeds in overtaking them, he will not have lost his lesson. His mother, it is true, will not exactly have had her way; but she reckons that no loss, as her way was not her end; she will have enlisted his will. The victory which the boy will have won is not over her. The only antagonist he has had is himself. Because of her respect for him, he will now have a new respect for himself and for her. He is on the road to acquiring the will to obey.

If it had been one of the other two who had disobeyed, her course might have been different. A sullen, recalcitrant will, open-eyed, calculating, defiant, might easily suggest a different treatment. "You have chosen your leaden soldiers; now leaden soldiers it shall be. Since you did not make your duty your choice, then I shall arrange matters so that your choice shall be your duty. Nothing but leaden soldiers till we return." Such a variation

in the treatment of children smacks not in the least of partiality. It simply means that respect for the child has involved respect for his individuality. The maxim, Let the punishment fit the crime, may express a principle of action useful for the government of a State or of a school; but for the purposes of the home it should be altered so as to read, Let the punishment fit the child.

This ought to be the answer whenever that question arises that still serves the purpose of discussion in the correspondence columns of the newspapers, Is corporal punishment defensible? The conventional answer nowadays is, No. This is supposed to betoken the benignant mind. Any other answer nowadays classifies one as an autocratic brute. It seems to be assumed that corporal punishment must necessarily be administered in the jaunty spirit of the Chinese proverb which runs: "A cloudy day — leisure to beat the children." Real tenderness of heart,

so runs the accepted modern doctrine, forbids the infliction of physical pain. In all these discussions, however, one consideration seems to be ignored — a decent respect for children. To one who is governed by this consideration, there is only one answer to the question, Do you believe in spanking a child? That answer is comprised in another question, What child? It is not necessary to go as far as Menander, who declared, "He who is not flogged is not educated," to be convinced that a good many children have been deprived of their rights because they have never been spanked.

There was once a little girl who could never forget the indignity she suffered in a spanking she had received. She grew up with her mind resolutely set against all corporal punishment. In the course of time she was married and had two children. With one of them she had no problems of discipline; but with the other, a daughter, she had problems that taxed

her wits to the utmost. At times the little girl seemed verily possessed. At last, in desperation, this harassed mother, driven into recreancy to her own principle, resorted to the form of chastisement she had forsworn. The effect was instantaneous. The child was relieved, as it were, from herself. With some temperaments in some moods the rod is like the wand of a magician. The childish petulance, the outburst of temper, the streak of almost malicious perversity, is but the child's way of expressing his quarrel with himself; and when the sharp physical pain comes, it seems to announce the subjugation of an enemy. In a household there are three children. One, sensitive to physical pain, shrivels and warps at the very prospect of it; a second is deterred from no act by the fear of it, and is altered not a whit by the memory of it; the third seems to find in it the comforting sense of being mastered at those times when he is out of sorts with himself, and re-

sponds to it with renewed affection and restored sweetness of temper. For the mother of that trio academic discussions on corporal punishment are not only uninteresting — they are positively irritating. She has paid her children the decent respect of considering their temperaments.

III

BY RULE OF WIT

AT a dinner-table one evening, a man who was interested in his own children stated a rule by which he made sure that no child of his would disobey him. The rule is infallible. He remarked to his companion: —

"I never give a command to my children."

"What do you do?" he was asked.

"I tell them stories."

That expresses a perfectly intelligible policy: Abdicate, and you will never have a disobedient child. You will also never have an obedient one. The fact that the man who made this statement was an Anarchist explains his theory. He regarded obedience not as a virtue, but as a defect. He was altogether consistent. A disbeliever in government for society,

he declined to establish any government for his family. In place of government, however, he at least took pains to establish something else. This was a systematic appeal to the child's imagination.

If one had to choose between government and influence over children through the imagination, there might be some reason for discarding government. As a matter of fact, however, the use of the imagination, so far from being antagonistic to effective government, is indispensable to it. The reason why we parents so often fail in securing obedience, and, what is more important still, in developing in our children the spirit of obedience, is that we are deficient in imagination — or at least that what imagination we have is untrained.

In this faculty in which we are weak, children are strong. A little four-year-old I know, in making letters for his own amusement, frequently attaches arms and legs to them; it is his way of pictorially

representing the animation he ascribes to them. Indeed, he sometimes goes so far as to transfer in mind these limbs to the object which the letters spell. Thus, he laboriously prints the letters P–I–G, adds to each letter a lively pair of legs, and exclaims: "See, the pig is running!" Mental processes like that, complicated though it is, are common with children. A child left alone in the nursery with his blocks will find them transformed into trains, steamboats, people, trees, animals, whatever he wills. In this picturesque form imagination may be called fancy; but it has many other phases. Imagination is an element in memory. Ability to recall a sound requires imagination. When, for instance, a child repeats a word he has heard some one use, his imagination has enabled him to summon up the sound of that word. Imagination is an element in emulation. When a child is trying to outdo another, or outdo his own past performances, he has to

picture to his mind what he or his competitor has done and what the desirable outcome of the struggle would be. Imagination is an element even in fear and hope. When a child dreads a punishment or eagerly awaits a reward, it is his imagination that gives him the power to anticipate.

Like every other instinct, imagination needs training. We all carry about with us a menagerie of instincts. Some of them have been ill-treated. In what a pitiable shape is the dyspeptic's food instinct! It has died of over-indulgence, and its corpse mocks him at every meal. The instinct of fighting has been given a bad name, and in many a well-conducted menagerie is kept chained; but it has been known to survive the most rigorous repression, and to spring out with most abounding vitality in the midst of a meeting on behalf of peace. We have learned to avoid those people whose instinct of curiosity is not bridle-wise;

and we all have recourse at times to those who have nourished, groomed, and trained their play instinct. The fact is, that the process of education consists largely in transforming these instincts of ours, which in their original state are wild and unmanageable, into domesticated and useful habits.

Now, imagination is a vigorous beast. Its youthful antics are very picturesque and amusing; it is sometimes whimsical and troublesome; but it can be made of the greatest service. Indeed, for all kinds of work, I know of no species of instinct which I would more highly recommend. As a draught animal it is indefatigable; and nothing else can take its place for pleasure-driving. Yet I have heard of a private school for young women from which all fairy books are excluded, on the ground that a girl's imagination needs repression. Like some other instincts, imagination cannot be altogether repressed, though it can be tamed and guided. If it

is left boxed up and wild, it is apt to break out and take a canter through dangerous regions. Since, then, we cannot take a child's imagination from him, and we run into peril if we neglect it, the profitable course is to show him how to break it to harness and make it serve him.

We cannot do this, however, unless we have paid some attention to the training of our own imagination. As a wild young colt will trot about beside its dam, so a child's imagination will readily follow that of an older person. But the two must be at least in the same lot. If we are going to appeal to a child's imagination in teaching him how to obey, we must exercise some imagination in giving commands. We thus come upon that recurrent principle that the chief task in the training of children is the training of ourselves.

That imagination may be used in maintaining strictness of discipline seems to some to be almost a contradiction in terms. It seems like invoking an imp

of dreams to assist in adding up a column of figures. In many minds imagination suggests dreaminess, wool-gathering, waywardness, irresponsibility. That is one reason why we parents who like to be obeyed, who are inclined to believe that it is a virtue to be dictatorial, and who sometimes confuse our own will with the immutable principles of righteousness, so often fall into error. To a child there is nothing more serious, nothing more real and regular, than the products of his imagination, and nothing more vague, whimsical, irregular, than the unexplained orders which he receives from grown people. If we wish to impress a child with the seriousness and reality of our authority, we had better put our imagination into condition.

There were two small boys in a town of the Middle West. Active, spirited, mischievous, and in other respects healthy, these two lads — the younger about four years old, I believe — gave their father

and mother much concern. One day an old drill-sergeant established in the neighborhood a class for boys, and in a short time received these two as pupils. The transformation was sudden. The boys were soldiers. Happily, their mother was imaginative. They were therefore soldiers not merely in the class, but also at home. The standards of conduct put before them, the punishments dealt out to them, and the rewards bestowed upon them were such as befitted defenders of the home. Obedience, promptness, chivalry, order, courage, regularity, honor, truthfulness, were not unreasonable qualities to expect from such as they. When one of these warriors was absent without leave for the greater part of a day — in other words, ran away — it was not inappropriate that he should be kept in solitary confinement on short rations. The discipline meted out to those youngsters was, from any point of view, severe. Even corporal punishment, which, as ordinarily applied,

is crudely devoid of the imaginative element, became measurably glorified; it was a part of the hardship which they were called upon to endure as good soldiers. Of course this régime was accompanied with plenty of instruction in military traditions and practices. A constant visitor to that household has found in the manliness and good breeding of these children a source of amazed gratification. In another family, who had no access to a drill-sergeant with a streak of poetry, a somewhat different method has been in vogue. The boys in that family do not belong, as it were, to the regular army, but rather to the militia. They are not always under a military régime, but are liable to a summons at any time. When they hear the command, "Fall in," they know they are expected to stand in line and await orders. In the absence of their parents, they know that the older person left in charge is their commanding officer; and

upon their parents' return they know that they will be called upon to fall into line, salute, and report to their father. Each is supposed to report any infraction of discipline which he himself — not his comrades — has committed. No punishment is administered as a result of such report, except for deliberate concealment. Each also reports some especial pleasure he has had. A good report is followed by formal and official congratulation. A reminder in the form of a sign, marked "Remember the Report," and placed in a conspicuous position in the nursery, has helped to train and direct their imagination. Since the report includes a record of enjoyments as well as of offenses, this reminder is not so threatening as to many people it would seem. Indeed, the proposal that such a sign be used met with instant approval from the young militiamen.

Those who object to tin soldiers as toys will have little patience with this metamorphosis of real children into crea-

tures of militarism. Very well, let them be monks instead, or members of a labor union, or railway employees, or idealized legislators, or even honest policemen, anything that will not put too great a strain on the imagination — of the adults. The point is simply that the exercise of the strictest authority over children is compatible with the most lavish use of the imagination.

There is nothing necessarily soft or flabby about the imaginative life. There is no special reason why little children should be afflicted with continual talk about the dear little birdies or the sweet little flowers. Indeed, the natural taste of children seems to be attracted in the opposite direction. One small boy, when he inquired about a bloody Bible picture, and was put off with the explanation that it was not a pleasant story, expressed the views of many of his age when, looking up angelically, he exclaimed with ecstasy, "I like to hear about horrid things."

Even the rod can, as I have suggested, be used imaginatively. A small boy who is well acquainted with the story of the Israelites in Egypt has invoked its aid. He is not overburdened with a sense of moral responsibility. One day, when he was dawdling over his task of changing his shoes and stockings, it was suggested that his father be an Egyptian and he be an Israelitish slave. He joyfully acquiesced. His father took the tip of a bamboo fishing-rod as badge of authority and stood by. In a few moments the boy was dawdling. A slight rap over the shins recalled him to his duty. There was no complaint; for he knew it was the business of the overseer to keep the slave at his task. His shoes and stockings were changed in a very much shorter time than was customary; and he contemplated his finished work with satisfaction. A few days later, when he had a similar task to perform, he proposed of his own accord a repetition of the perform-

ance; and carried out his part with spirit. When we adults remember how much we rely upon some outside stimulus to keep us at our work — the need of money, the esteem of our neighbors, the fear of disease, the mandate of the law — we ought to be able to understand the reason why such an appeal to the imagination as this acted as a reinforcement of the boy's will, and therefore, by very reason of its disciplinary character, was actually welcomed.

Two other boys similarly acquainted with the experiences of Israel in Egypt contrived an application of one of those experiences to their own case. They had several times been thrilled by the account of the exciting race between the Israelites and the Egyptians to the Red Sea, and had repeatedly found relief in the safe arrival of the Israelites on the other side and the literally overwhelming defeat of the cruel army of Pharaoh. One evening their mother was engaged in washing

the supper dishes, and they were engaged, as usual, in helping her by wiping the silver. On several occasions they had been so little intent on their work that their mother had finished all the washing and had wiped the china and glassware before they had wiped and put away the silver. This evening one of them suddenly became seized with a fancy. His mother was the Egyptian army and he and his comrade were the host of Israel. When the last fork had rattled into its place and the silver-drawer was shut, what a shout of joy arose! The Egyptians had been outdistanced; the Israelites were safe. After that, when there were signs of inattention, the warning cry, "The Egyptians are coming!" would rouse them into instant and happy action. Now those children usually do this work rapidly. They have formed in themselves a valuable habit.

That was not a device. It was the exemplification of a principle. A habit,

I suppose, can be beaten into a child; but it is more lasting as well as more wholesome if it has been created, in part at least, by the child's own will; and it is the imagination, charged as it is with feeling, which can most surely summon the will into activity.

The difference between ignoring this principle and recognizing it may be illustrated by contrasting two concrete instances. In the one case the mother appears at the nursery door.

"Look at this room!" she exclaims; "it is very untidy." She thus puts the brand of disapproval upon disorder. "All the blocks and toys must be put away and you must be all washed for supper by six o'clock; and you have so much to do, you must begin at once."

"But I want to build this house."

"No; you must begin now." This is for the purpose, the mother explains to herself, of preparing the child to meet the harsh demands of an unfeeling world.

She notes that the child begins listlessly to pick up some of the scattered blocks, one by one, and drop them into the box where they are kept. After an absence of several minutes she returns. She sees but little change, although the child is hastily putting some toys away. She is aware, however, that this activity started only when her footfall sounded in the hall.

"If those things are not all in their places on time, I shall have to punish you."

The mother is vexed, the child is unhappy and rebellious. A daily experience of this sort may result finally in some kind of habit in the child; but only at great cost of effort to the mother, and at the sacrifice of much of the normal relationship between the two.

Another mother appears at the door of the nursery.

"In five minutes it will be time to begin to put away the blocks and toys," she announces, thus giving some time

for the builder to complete operations. Then she asks, "What are you going to be this evening?"

"I think I'll be Michael bringing the wood to the wood-box for the fire."

In five minutes she calls: "Michael, I want all the wood put into the wood-box."

The builder is now transformed for the time being into Michael. He has seen the lusty Irishman carry great armfuls of wood, and his own frail arms assume new dignity. He gathers the blocks by the dozen, and as he lets them fall, kerplunk, into the box, he sees great logs falling into place. In a few moments his mother reappears.

"You have been working hard, Michael, have n't you? I think you will have the wood in its place in plenty of time. How much better the room looks without those logs of wood lying all about! You can carry a good many logs at once, can't you?"

Repeated every day, this process will inevitably develop into a habit of orderliness. The regularity of the process is not in the least impaired by the fact that one evening it assumes the form of stacking up firewood, another evening of bringing in bags of coal to the cellar, another evening of loading merchandise on to a vessel. It is the same will that directs Michael, and the coal man, and the stevedore, and it is the same brain that receives the repeated impression of promptness and good order. In each case, whether it is Michael, or the coal man, or the stevedore, the workman is doing his task under orders; he is subject to authority. And if Michael, or the coal man, or the stevedore fails to do his duty, it is not inappropriate that he should suffer a penalty. Of course it will be more effective if the penalty can be made suitable to the character. Whether it is made suitable or not will depend largely upon the imagination of the person

in authority. As a rule, however, the spirit of such a process as that which I have illustrated is less that of discipline than of instruction, or perhaps more accurately, the spirit of discipline through instruction. It is, in fact, just because instruction plays so large a part in the government of children that those in authority need to have constant recourse to their imagination.

Deficiency in imagination is exhibited by parents not merely in their relation to their children, but quite as frequently in the relation between husband and wife. Criticism of the one by the other in the presence of the children can be accounted for, as a rule, only by a defective imagination. If the critic could be put for a moment in the place of the child who has heard the reproof, he would be amazed at discovering how he had weakened not only the mother's authority, but also his own. In a certain household, let us say, the mother is strongly of the opinion that

it is injurious for the children to eat anything between meals; the father, however, scouts the idea, and actually keeps, in his pocket, sweetmeats for which he invites the children to search. If he had imagination enough to look into his own children's minds, he would be mortified at what he would see. Parents at cross-purposes are simply exhibiting their own stupidity. Without imagination, therefore, there can be only the most ineffective government in the family.

It is surprising, on the other hand, how the exercise of the imagination will clear away many perplexing difficulties in discipline; for in the light of the imagination many of these difficulties are seen to be problems in moral instruction. Let me illustrate.

The boys whom I have already described as militiamen were left by their parents, for a day, in charge of a competent nurse. When they were called upon to report in the customary military fashion

concerning their behavior, they all confessed to certain offenses involving the marring of property.

"Would you have done that if mamma or I had been there?" their father asked.

"No," was the reply.

"Then you sneaked on us."

That word "sneaked" was apparently new to them; it upset their gravity. The entire company, including the commander, was soon convulsed. What could be done? The case could not be allowed to end thus. Finally, after some degree of order was restored, the commander proposed that they all take turns in sneaking on one another. The plan which was accepted with enthusiasm was this: Two of the boys were to leave the room; then the third, in their absence, was to find some precious possession of each of the two and destroy it. No sooner, however, were the victims in another room than they raised a vigorous protest. As this was to be not a punishment but an experiment,

the protest was heeded. The tables were turned; one of the victims was appointed executioner, and the executioner took the place of victim. After several trials it was proved that nobody wished to have his property destroyed. They thus learned that, however much fun it was to sneak on some one else, they did not wish any one else to sneak on them. Although they agreed, too, that if each had a turn there would be nothing unfair, they were all unwilling to lose precious possessions even for the fun of playing an underhand trick. By this time one of the boys had decided that all sneaking "was bad." It was then proposed to the other two that their father go out, and that they should sneak on him. This seemed to be a solution. They would have the fun and suffer none of the loss. When they had committed themselves to this opinion, their father called their attention to the fact that he had already had his turn at being victim, and that now it was only

fair that he should have his turn at being executioner. There was no escape. At the very moment when they were looking for all the gain and none of the loss, they were confronted with the prospect of suffering, perfectly justly, all of the loss and having none of the gain. By that time the word "sneak" conveyed an idea that was quite the opposite of humorous, and they were in position to appreciate their father's repudiation of any intention to act as a sneak. It was necessary for them to travel a long and roundabout way before they reached the point at which they could genuinely disapprove what they themselves had done. In the frame of mind in which at first they had been, punishment would have been meaningless; it would have signified nothing more than that an older person was vexed at something, and that they had to bear the ill effects of the vexation. What they needed primarily was not discipline but instruction. Incidentally, it may be

added, they had a good deal of discipline in the process.

We are likely to forget that moral distinctions are not instinctive, but are the product of experience. The capacity to distinguish between the good and the evil is, we may all agree, inherent; but ability in deciding what acts belong in the category of the good and what in the category of the evil is acquired. There is no magic voice within a little child informing him what a lie is and warning him that it is evil. It is not enough, moreover, to tell a child over and over again that lying is wrong; it is equally necessary to instruct him so that he will recognize a lie when he encounters it. The knack of recognizing the difference between truth and falsehood is like the knack of recognizing the difference between edible and poisonous mushrooms. It comes only after careful instruction and long practice, and it is not as easy as it seems. Is "Alice in Wonderland" falsehood? Are the statements in

Stevenson's "Child's Garden of Verses" true? I believe I could set an examination in the subject, asking for reasons for the answers, which a good many parents could not satisfactorily pass. A child who habitually lies may be consciously doing wrong; but it is also possible that he has been simply ill-taught, or is not old enough to be taught at all in this subject. In order to reach a child's mind for the purpose of enabling him to see the difference between a lie and the truth, we must have imagination enough to put ourselves in the child's place sufficiently to find out what his conception of the truth is. It is easy to assume that a child is lying when he is merely experimenting with language, or is desiring to please, or is playing with his fancies. If we want children to understand us, we must exercise enough imagination to understand them. After we have established some basis of mutual understanding, we can feel free to proceed with rigorous discipline.

I hope I shall not be misunderstood. It is not necessary that a child should understand the reason for a command before he obeys. Obedience first and reasons afterwards is a good rule, and one that may even prevent disasters. It is necessary, however, that a child should understand what it is he is commanded to do or not to do. It requires some imagination to ascertain whether the child understands this or not.

Instruction in manners, like instruction in morals, requires the use of the imagination. The adult who is receiving his first lesson in golf ought to be able to understand why a child has difficulty in properly holding his spoon; the difference between a niblick and a stymie is not nearly so hard to learn as the difference between "Please" and "Thank you." Manners are more arbitrary than the technical terms of a game or a calling. Why it should be wrong but not naughty to eat with your knife or to sing at the table, children do not readily see.

As with regard to morals and manners, so with regard to all that a child has to learn, instruction is best coupled with imagination. A generation ago my grandfather wrote a book. Its title seems to attach it to a long bygone age. It is called "Gentle Measures in the Management and Training of the Young." [1] I know of no book which in spirit or in principles is more modern. I do not think its substance will ever be antiquated. It was through no fault or merit of mine that the author of this book was my grandfather; so I can see no reason why I should not be as free as any one else might be in expressing the wish that every parent who has some interest in the training of children might not only possess a copy, but also read it studiously. His words, with their touch of quaintness, concerning the use of imagination in the teaching of children were but the transcript of the principles which he had established by use and found practicable.

[1] By Jacob Abbott. (Harper and Brothers.)

Are the children restive or boisterous? Do they talk incessantly and nonsensically? A little imagination will suggest what should be done with them. They are steam engines under full head of steam. If you do not wish to starve them into lassitude, set their activity to work in some direction that will not be troublesome. Has one of the children pinched his hand in the door or bumped his head? Summon up your imagination. He is a man who has met with an accident; call the ambulance, which comes in the form of a two-legged creature, to carry him to the hospital, which to grown-up eyes looks amazingly like the couch in the sewing-room; give him some medicine out of a bottle, which has the appearance of a shoe-horn. Is there an altercation in the nursery? Let there be a court established, and the issue heard and decided in due form. No retinue of servants can work such wonders as a moderately alert imagination.

If we parents have allowed our own imaginations to become atrophied through disuse, so that we are incapacitated from sharing in the most vivid part of our children's world, there is at least one thing we can do; we can restrain our natural impulse to interfere with our children's imagination. For a generous portion of every day we can leave our children alone. We are, of course, useful to them in emergencies, but ordinarily we prosy folk are in their way. What a nuisance we are when we impose upon an imaginative child that horror known as a mechanical toy! The nodding mandarin is so insistently a mandarin that no child with a healthy imagination can respect it. Off with its head! it then can conceivably be the pillar of a house, or a chimney for a steamboat. Large flat wooden dolls that come in a game-set have been known to serve admirably as roofs for block houses. Shall we allow the children to abuse their toys in this wise? exclaims the prosaic

adult. The children might well reply, Must we be forced to lose our real world and to live in a commonplace, unreal world like yours? Elaborate dolls, complicated mechanisms, elegant playthings, may gratify the vanity of an adult, and even whet the curiosity of the growing boy and girl, but will not take the place of real toys like blocks of wood and spools and marbles. If we must nag him at other times, at least in his play let us leave the child alone with his imagination and the materials which his imagination can best use. If we are nonplussed by the enjoyment which a child finds in such simple things, it is because we have not the imagination to perceive that these very same simple things are the most capable of varied transformation.

Like those complicated toys which are made merely because the adults, who have the money, buy them, some kindergartens are engines of destruction. The play instinct, which psychologists kindly

explain is simply the instinct for self-directed activity, is in mortal peril from people who are always for supervising children's games. Controlling the play of children is really attempting the impossible. As soon as it is controlled from the outside, play ceases to be play. If some one else directs the child, he ceases to be self-directed. Play is not mere recreation; it is sometimes very serious business. What makes it play is that it is not done under orders. And real play requires imagination. We parents can spoil our children by confining them to the artificial things we enjoy in lieu of our own minds. If we wish to amuse ourselves, we can do so for a time by spoiling our children. But if we wish them to enjoy life, as well as to grow strong in body and mind and character, we will not tempt them by the spices, the mechanisms, the artifices of our world, but will leave them as much as possible to wander and play and work unmolested in the world of simple things. Simple

food, simple occupations, simple toys, simple surroundings — at least such we call them; in fact, there are no riches like them to the child — or the adult for that matter — who has not been robbed of his imagination. If we have lost ours, and must go about our task of instruction and discipline in the unreal way of the dry-as-dust, we can at least leave the child his. That is possible for the dullest of us.

IV

PEACE AT A PRICE

ADVICE to wives usually begins with this sort of exhortation: When your husband returns from the office, greet him smilingly; exile from your face the traitorous lines of care, imprison in the silences of your mind the petty vexing trials of the day, dismiss to their own quarters the evidences of housework. Your husband's home is his castle; when he takes refuge there in flight from his enemies, the cares of his vocation, do not confront him with your own. We are all familiar with this strain. It sounds well. But, after all, the lord's castle is his lady's battlefield. If she is a very fine lady indeed, she may not have engaged in any personal encounters. If her resources and disposition permit, she may hire mercenaries to do her fighting for her. In that case her bat-

tles have been sham battles, and she has no relic of carnage to hide. If, however, she is not one of those who regard one child as a nuisance and two as an intolerable burden, and therefore prefers to conduct the campaign of their training herself, she can hardly be sure of turning nightly the battlefield of that home into the semblance of an impregnable castle. The fact is, any woman who regards motherhood as a vocation quite as worthy of respect as yelling on the Stock Exchange (and that I believe is a very, very respectable vocation indeed) will find it a serious drain on her physical and nervous resources.

However much a woman may court martyrdom, I never heard of one who deliberately invited vexation of spirit. She may find a genuine happiness in the weariness she has incurred for the sake of some great object; but she finds no happiness in the annoyances she encounters purposelessly. Now, it is just these vexations,

these annoyances, which it is a part of her vocation to avoid. So far from being an incident of motherhood, they are an impediment.

Most of these annoyances, these vexations, with which a mother has to contend, come from a maladjustment between her children and their environment. Quarrels among themselves, irritability and disobedience toward her, impositions upon the servants, pertness with their elders, insubordination toward their teachers, altercations with their playmates, and friction with the neighbors — it is affairs of these sorts that bray a woman's nerves and wrack her mind. No woman can long endure these things. There are not many courses open to her. She can die, or she can rid herself of her children by consigning them to servants who are paid for accepting her responsibility. In either case she no longer concerns us. Let us suppose, however, that she remains a mother. Then the only course that she can

pursue is to attempt some mode of adjustment.

There are two ways in which she can act. She can undertake either to adjust her children to their environment, or to adjust their environment to them. Almost every mother adopts either one way or the other within the first two months of her first baby's life. The young lord of creation puts the problem squarely before her: Am I to begin my reign now — and I warn you it will be a case of whimsical autocracy — or must I take my place in the order of this household? If his mother is a washerwoman, he gets no answer; she goes about her washing and he finds his place without much remonstrance. The children of the poor are blessed with mothers who have this problem settled for them by the gaunt hand of necessity. If, however, this lordling has been born in the purple, even of very light shade, he has a good chance of seizing the sceptre at the very first

grasp. He certainly will seize it and wield it relentlessly, if his mother decides to do the easiest thing. At the beginning and for some time it is easier to conform the household to the baby than the baby to the household. It is easier because strictly at the beginning it is necessary. Even the household of the washerwoman is swerved for a few days out of its regular course; but when the wash comes in again, the household is swerved back. The trouble comes in those families where the mother's will has to take the place of somebody else's wash. Of course there are cases which cannot be considered normal. The newcomer is puny and needs the constant attention that every invalid requires; or the mother's strength has been sapped, and she must, for everybody's sake, do the easiest thing. In such cases there is no choice. Ordinarily, however, the issue is not long postponed. The trained nurse, if there is one, can have a good deal to do in deciding it. Probably it will be most

distinctly raised over a question of feeding. The foundation of absolute monarchy within many a plain American home has been laid by allowing the diminutive heir apparent to engage in midnight feasting when every consideration of orderliness commanded sleep. It is on such an occasion that a man, if he has any chivalry in him, will sustain his wife's good resolution. If he chooses to be anything more to his household than a purveyor, he will not have to wait long to make good his determination.

The difference between a household adjusted to a child and a child adjusted to a household is the difference between unstable and stable equilibrium. Quietness, peace, and an aspect of repose may be found in both cases; but in the one case every new movement threatens an upset.

There are two kinds of households, the adjustable and the unadjustable. A child, let us say, wakes in the morning. If he is

accustomed to an adjustable household, there is an end of sleep for those who have the care of him. For the sake of peace to the others some one has to keep him quietly amused until the time of rising. That some one, we all can guess, is the mother. At breakfast it is the child that is first served, and when he is finished with eating it is his new demands that interrupt the meal. The mother does her household tasks under the child's supervision. In order to avoid the necessity of leaving them to rush upon every demand to the nursery, she manages to have him in the room with her. Tethering him to the leg of a table, barricading him behind chairs, occupying his mind now with one bauble, now with another, she succeeds, with the exercise of an acquired versatility, in securing for him safety from harm, for the furniture measurable immunity from damage, and for herself a comparatively noiseless morning. When the time for his nap arrives, she, as the available mem-

ber of the household, leaves everything else and puts him to sleep. After he wakes and is dressed, a caller arrives. For an instant forgetful, she starts to leave the young ruler. A wail recalls her. A gurgle of satisfaction rewards her for taking him in her arms. The visitor is now a part of the household and must be properly adjusted. At the sight of the caller the baby makes violent protest. Then comes the period of coaxing, unsatisfactory to the child, troublesome to the mother, and disconcerting to the guest. Irreconcilable, the youngster is handed over to some one for the nonce, and the visitor concludes the call and departs to the accompaniment of mourning. The despot is easily restored to good humor as soon as he sees again his favorite subject. The one annoying episode of the day is easily set down against the account, not of the child, not of his mother, but of the caller. "That black gown she wore" many a time does duty as an explanation for what is really

the product of an adjustable household. Aside from the more immediate and obvious disadvantages of the adjustable household, there is this: that it hardly fits the child for living in an unadjustable world.

The child who greets the morning in an unadjustable household finds at hand enough to amuse him until it is time for his bath. His mother has not led him to expect anything else. I remember a little fellow whom I used to see a few years ago. Of delicate organism, decidedly high-strung, very sensitive to sound and motion, he needed as much attention as any well baby ever did. Regularly every morning, after giving him his breakfast and getting him ready for the day, his mother took him to the nursery, left him on the padded floor, gave him his few blocks, and left him to his devices. She was free to go downstairs then about her work. She was not beyond earshot. When the sun was high, she wrapped him up

well, put him in his carriage, and, wheeling him out on the porch, left him again alone. In the afternoon the process was reversed: first the sunny porch, then the quiet nursery. Times for play with him came to an end according to her judgment, not his. Because she loved him and understood her vocation as mother, she established in this nervous child the habit of encountering the world with placidity. This is the way of the mother who determines that her household shall be unadjustable.

There are those who regard childhood as a period when the individual becomes, to use Stevenson's phrase, "well armored for this world." It is this conception of childhood as a preparation for after-life that underlies Huxley's essay on liberal education. There are others who would say, with a recent writer, that childhood is not to be regarded as a preparation for youth that in turn becomes a preparation for manhood, but rather is to be made "beautiful and glorious in and for itself,

not a vestibule to a vestibule to a vestibule." Whichever of these two views we take, we shall find, I think, that the only way of escape from disorder and confusion is not by adjusting the child's environment to him, but by adjusting him to his environment.

The one unescapable part of our children's environment is — ourselves. Over them we are always impending. At inconvenient times we rise in their way and impede their most absorbing occupations. On their excursions into the wilds of fancy it is we who obtrude and with philistine complacency drive them back into the gross world of wash-basins and table manners. Three small boys are busy blasting. One is a workman; a second is the fuse; the third is the hole, and is about to explode for the sixth time. Who interrupts with some trivial but insistent remark about less noise or clean clothes? One of us. And the worst of it is that we who are so troublesomely recurrent, and

who are their source of supplies, seem to be incapable of appreciating the delights of becoming at will a trolley-car, an alligator, a goblin, or a hole in the ground. That is the sort of environment we are; and if we are going to adjust our children to it, we ought to understand how knurly it is. When we understand that, we shall perhaps see the importance of giving our children a chance to explode without being flung repeatedly against our prosy protuberances. Sometimes we can manage that by simply giving them room for their own Arcady. (And it is not our business to insist that their Arcady be our sort.) Sometimes it will be necessary to manage this otherwise. We may, for instance, live in a flat. In that case we may actually have to exercise some imagination and suggest to them an occupation which will keep them from a too rasping contact with us. The first requisite, then, for peace is a reasonable degree of non-interference.

Interference, however, we cannot always avoid. Then the question becomes one of interfering without friction. Any one can give commands to a child, or instruct him after a fashion, or punish him; but to exercise authority over a child and at the same time keep on good terms with him, that is an art in which we are not all equally adept. But it is an art we must master if we are to be free of unnecessary annoyance and a great deal of fruitless pother. We cannot be on good terms with a healthy child except on the basis of justice. That is one reason why an altercation with a child is a sign of failure in discipline: it is not sportsmanlike. It lacks the prime element of justice, an equal chance for each opponent. When we take a child for an antagonist, we do not enter a square fight; we have him at an unfair advantage. He knows it as well as we, and that is why, even if we win — as win we ought with size and strength and wit on our side — our victory is an inglorious

failure. When he succumbs in the struggle, he has learned only one thing — that he must enlarge his resources. A small boy leaves his sled in the front hall. He is ordered to remove it and he refuses. Then comes the tussle. Rather than go to bed, he finally complies. The next time he awaits the approach of a visitor. This time he leaves his sled in the front hall and flees. He has learned his lesson — to pick the place and moment for battle when the enemy is at a disadvantage. The visitor, serenely unconscious of the fact, has diverted the enemy. The sled is whisked out of sight. No penalty now inflicted on the boy can be to him other than the manifestation of resentment and chagrin on the part of an outwitted adversary. In such a case what does justice suggest? There is the voice of one in authority.

"Your sled is in the front hall; put it away."

"But I don't want to. I'm playing."

The affair seems to be at an end. There is no insistence; there are no threats.

A day later. "Mamma! Mamma! Where's my sled?"

"Did you look in its place?"

"Yes, and it is n't there."

"Where did you leave it?"

"I don't know."

"Think."

(With shamed face) "I guess in the front hall."

"You had better look in the front hall, then."

"It is n't there."

"Did you expect to find it there?"

"No-o."

There is no ground for altercation here. Perhaps there may be need for explanation. The loss of a day's coasting in this case may be actually a severer punishment than the threatened hours in bed in the other case, but it comes in the course of justice, and the boy knows it. Nobody has won a victory, because there has been

no struggle; but somebody has learned a lesson. And through it all the boy remains on good terms with his environment.

Of course it would never do for a child to live in too just a world; his awakening upon entrance into the world that we grown folks have made for ourselves would be cruelly rude. He must have ample chance to learn how to meet injustice. Happily, such chance will frequently come his way without any solicitude on our part. One can discern something almost purposeful in the fact that the sense of justice is no part of the parental instinct. Indeed, it seems as if it had been made especially difficult for grown people to deal justly with children. For one thing, in order to be just with a child one must be prepared to believe anything, no matter how preposterous. Once on a time a little girl was going downstairs. In her arms she held a precious doll. She knew that it was a prized family possession. To her consternation she suddenly felt it leave her

hold, and in an instant she saw it lying broken upon the stairs. When she was questioned by her mother, she announced simply that the doll had jumped from her arms. In spite of all that her mother said to her on the evil of willful untruth, she persisted in her story. Whether she was punished I do not know; but if she was, it was not because of an accident, but because of a falsehood. In any case, she suffered the indignity of being disbelieved. For a long time the feeling of injustice rankled in her. It was not until she had grown old enough to learn that a doll cannot leap that she relinquished her faith in the statement which had been treated by her mother as a lie. A dash of credulity would have established a good understanding with that child; but that was too much to expect. It is not easy to be credulous at the right times. That is one reason why we need never take pains lest we be too just with our children.

PEACE AT A PRICE

With the best of intentions, the most competent of us will now and then lapse into deeds of injustice. If we discovered them all, we should lead uneasy lives. A kind Providence, however, keeps us oblivious of most of them; and our children are slow in learning to preserve a grudge. When one of us, however, discovers that he has been unjust toward his child, what does he do? That depends on his standards. If his ambition is to be omniscient and infallible, he keeps the discovery to himself, and, if he corrects the injustice, manages by some subterfuge to make the correction, not an act of justice, but an act of grace. His policy might be epitomized in Jowett's motto for public men: with children his practice is, "Never retract, never explain; get it done, and let them howl." For one who does not care to pay the price of courage and self-respect, this rule can be made to work very well. One whose ambition, however, is to be authoritative with children will value

sincerity with them as a principle and not as an expedient. Karl has apparently been guilty of willful disobedience; he has done something he was told not to do. The punishment which regularly follows rebellion is announced. It then transpires that what seemed disobedience was really misunderstanding. What can be done? Since the maternal court does not crave infallibility, the error in sentence is acknowledged. So far from impairing confidence in the court, this proceeding actually tends to buttress it. The next time an adverse judgment is declared and sentence is inflicted, the culprit, even if he believes himself guiltless, will, if he thinks about it at all, suspect that the judge is attempting, not to preserve her dignity, but honestly to administer justice. A child can pay his parents no greater honor than by protesting, in the belief that he will be heard, that a threatened punishment would be unfair.

Even that mother who finds other occu-

pations more dignified and gratifying than that of motherhood cannot wholly escape the necessity of deciding whether the ground of her dealings with her children shall be justice or something else. In delegating responsibility to servants, she must decide whether she will delegate authority also. The woman who puts her children in the charge of a hired maid and then declares, "I will never require a child of mine to obey a servant," deliberately chooses to be unjust to her children. That she is also unjust to the servant is not so grave a matter. The servant can, if she wishes, find another mistress; but the child is compelled to be content as he can with that mother. Such a woman is usually quite powerless to secure obedience toward herself. When her daughters are grown, she wonders why they do not become her friends; when her sons are grown, she wonders why they exhibit no desire for her companionship.

The only footing for comradeship is

fair dealing. Even a sense of humor, essential as that is, will not take its place. Who would be a comrade with his children must first be just with them.

V

FOR 'T IS THEIR NATURE TO

WHY we expect children to be more tranquil than a parliamentary body or a ministers' meeting I do not know and cannot imagine. To be troubled because children quarrel is to deplore one of their chief prerogatives — the prerogative of being themselves. The time to be troubled is not when they quarrel merely, but when they quarrel in the wrong way or about wrong things. To teach children how to quarrel and what to quarrel about is one of the duties of parents.

Together with some compensating advantages, an only child has one indisputable misfortune: there is no one in the family he can really quarrel with. No altercation he might have with a grown-up could be dignified with the name of quarrel. All his quarreling he

must do outside his home. Consequently, he cannot receive from his parents all the attention that he might receive if he were, say, one of six. When he finally encounters other children, he does not know the bounds either of expediency in tolerating their idiosyncrasies, or of right in maintaining his own. With skill his parents may acquire artificially for themselves, as well as for him, the experiences which naturally befall a larger household. It is plain, therefore, that those parents are fortunate who have quarreling children. To them avenues of education are open which are closed to the parents of an only child.

I do not refer to those roads which, originating in the nursery, have led to the depths of theology or to the heights of moral discourse. The road which has landed more than one theologian in meditation upon the depraved nature of the child may well have had its beginning in childish quarrels. There was Jonathan

Edwards, for instance; he had ten sisters and about as many children. This suggests a fit subject for a thesis. Then that pleasanter if less picturesque way, bordered with the flowers and the weeds of rhetoric, which has brought the preacher and the versifier to sermons and rhymes for the edification of the young, must have received many a traveler from tributary paths of domestic strife. Isaac Watts, for instance, who being dead yet speaketh of dogs and bears and lions and children, was the eldest of nine. The avenues of education to which I refer, however, are open only to parents or vice-parents, and lead only to parental skill.

Some parents act as if they did not even know that these avenues exist. Consequently, when they encounter contention among their offspring, they fly in all directions at once. This undoubtedly makes for agility. For example: —

Waves of turmoil burst through the closed doors of the playroom, flood the

stairway, and whelm to the ears the placid group of grown-ups in the living-room. As the visiting cousin nervously halts her small talk, and the tired mother lays down her knitting, the master of the house, with an air of finality, gesturing the others into subsidence, breasts the billows of sound. Upward, two steps in a stride, he makes an assault upon the playroom.

"What's all this about?" as he flings open the door. "Bless me! everybody can hear you all over the house. Your mother and I are n't undertaking to keep a zoo. Do you suppose that somebody can be running up here every five minutes? Besides, don't you know that your mother's cousin Bettina is visiting us, and that she is distracted by this sort of uproar? Now don't try to interrupt. What did you say? That Ruth threw a coal-car at you? Why, Ruth, my little girl! that's a very dangerous thing to do. If you had struck one of the boys in the eye, you might have made

him blind. I shall have to take the cars away, if you are going to do dangerous things with them. What's that? They're not Ruth's cars? What of it? Does that make them any the less dangerous? Now, don't interrupt again. Besides, Ruth, that was a very unladylike thing for a little girl to do. And, boys, you are at fault, too. Ruth would never have done that if you had n't done something to her. Is that the way young gentlemen should treat a young lady? And Ruth is younger than you. She can't defend herself unless she does something like that. I shall have to punish you all; perhaps that will help you to learn how to behave. Now, you boys, go over to Ruth and ask her pardon; and, Ruth, you kiss them and tell them you're sorry. And now play together properly. See if you can't get along till tea-time without making a disturbance."

Satisfied that he has settled an acute difficulty, this composite father, in whose voice has sounded some tones that I dare

not disown, descends the peaceful stairs. What he has actually done has been to throw into hopeless unsettlement a situation that was after a fashion already half settled. If the children are quiet, it is because they are dazed by the feats of an acrobatic adult mind. They have watched their father make a circuit of the situation, cross at least a half-dozen paths that led safely out, and, ignoring all, return to the point of departure. The benefit they have received from the performance is not at all the benefit he believes he has imparted. It has not been, as he fancies, the benefit of discipline; it has been the benefit of diversion. As for himself, he has received that most welcome of benefits — a mental frame of complacency.

Not being as nimble as he, we may find it worth our while to stop for a moment at each path that he passed and explore it. What we are prone to forget is that from almost every difficulty of this kind

there are several exits, and that there is no progress made in attempting to travel more than one at a time. In this case, all need for the display of gymnastics might have been avoided by the consideration of a few simple questions.

One question has precedence of all others: Shall I interfere or not? To decide that question in the negative is to eliminate all the others. That it is necessary to do this, the conjunction of a quarrel and a luncheon party may demonstrate. The critical time comes when there is no luncheon party. To allow children some chance to settle their own differences is as certainly an act of discipline as it is to settle every difference for them. It is none the less discipline for the children because it seems to be chiefly self-discipline. A younger sister once had a grievance; she made her protest with a strident whine. Annoyed by the outburst, her mother descended upon the whole crew, wormed out the

merits of the case, and with an even hand apportioned among the offenders penalty or reproof. Having profited, as it happened, by this occurrence, the small girl, the next time she wished to gain an advantage over the others, resorted to the same whining outcry. Immediately the three older children fell to playing church. With a loud and discordant hymn, they designed to drown the sound of protest. Though at this time in the right, they preferred not to take the risk. Already well trained by her children, that mother was quick to remain where she was. It sometimes requires alertness to do nothing. Just though her interference had been, she saw that it not only had encouraged in one child an annoying mode of complaint, but also had suggested to the others a noisy mode of averting judgment. Thereafter it seemed easier for her to hesitate before participating in her children's controversies. How can children experiment with the principles with which their elders

have tried to endow them, except upon those occasions when those didactic elders do not interfere? How, on the other hand, can those same elders see what effect their precepts have had, unless the children can begin a quarrel on the chance that they may end it themselves? Deliberately to determine not to interfere in a children's quarrel comes not of grace but of labor. Any one can lapse into indifference as to the merits of a dispute between two youngsters, but only one who has come through affliction to self-control can at the same time maintain an acute interest in the triumph of the just cause and keep his hands off. The virtue of non-interference is not a gift, it is an achievement.

Occasions which demand interference, however, occur frequently enough to supply with plenty of exercise any normally active parental mind. Whenever it is clearly best that the children should not be allowed to end their quarrel themselves, the parent who is not in search merely

of self-complacency can ask himself a number of questions. Usually, the time for asking and answering those questions is very brief. The exercise is vigorous while it lasts. On the way from the living-room to the nursery, the hastening parent can, for example, perform this rapid mental scale passage: To what purpose am I interfering? Is it to suppress a noise? or to avert a danger? or to teach courtesy? or to instruct in morals? or to do justice? or to establish an amicable basis? Later, and perhaps more deliberately, he will run over this scale of questions: What means shall I use? Shall it be force? or argument? or ridicule? or explanation? or advice? or instruction? or command? or punishment? It requires practice to pounce upon the note principally out of tune in a wealth of discord, and then to choose the one tool that will set it right; but then, there is no vocation more exciting than parenthood.

The noise of a quarrel may be its most

serious offense. We can admit that fact without accepting as an invariable rule the maxim of our nervous, overwrought ancestors, Children should be seen and not heard. At times it seems, indeed, as if the present age were too phlegmatic. There are people for whose nerves children should be made to have some regard; there are invalids who do not thrive on din; there is necessary work which cannot be done in the midst of a racket; there are neighbors who declare, with some show of right, that they regard monopoly in noise as against public policy. So, whether for the sake of cousin Bettina's nerves, or a tired mother's rest, or a busy father's conference with a creditor, or merely for the sake of reputation with the neighbors, it may be best to disregard all other factors and insist on quiet. That seems clear enough. The trouble with us pretentious grown-ups is that usually when we undertake to stop a quarrel because it is disturbing, we delude ourselves into

thinking that we have some high moral purpose. We can expose our own fatuity by simply inquiring of ourselves, when we begin our preachment, Would we have interfered if this quarrel had not been so strepitous? It is one of the annoyances in the training of children that if we are to be honest with them, we must be honest with ourselves. I do not see how that can be helped. And with children honesty is prerequisite to authority. To pretend that we chiefly want them to be good at a time when really we chiefly want them to be quiet is to renounce all influence over them when really we arrive at the point of chiefly wanting them to be good. That is reason enough for being honest with them. So when we set out towards a quarrel with the determination of suppressing a noise, we shall, if we are honest, deal with the quarrel, not as turpitude, but as noise. We may not be able to persuade the contestants of the existence of nerves, or headaches, or

creditors, or neighbors, or even of our own reasonableness; but we shall at least probably succeed in conveying to them the genuineness of this single idea that is uppermost in our own mind: if you can't quarrel quietly, you shall not quarrel at all. If later we wish to impress upon them the necessity of being considerate of others, we can use that specific quarrel as an illustration without risking with them our reputation for singleness.

A quarrel may involve something which, even more than noise, demands instant interference. Two small boys were in an altercation. The older had a ball. The younger wanted that ball with a consuming hunger. The nearest weapon at hand was the discarded shaft of a golf club. Seizing it, he began his attack with reckless fury. The sound of a blow upon a piece of furniture followed by an outcry of fear brought their father to the room. His thought was not for anybody's manners or morals, nor for the disturbance,

nor for a just settlement of the contest; it was for the defenseless boy's head. There was but one possible measure: immediate and forcible confiscation of the club. This was frankly not punishment — which would have involved a moral judgment — but simply humane intervention. The announcement that the club was to remain confiscated for a week merely emphasized the extent of the intervention, not the severity of a punishment. The incident might have served as an occasion for a lecture upon the danger of the wanton use of weapons; as a matter of fact, I believe, it was, of a sort; but —

"Oh, daddy, it was my ball!"

"No, daddy, really it was n't!"

All such discussion as to the merits of the dispute was quashed. Likewise was stifled all inclination on the part of the intervening parent to deliver a lesson on the evils of an ungovernable temper. That might not have been confusing, if it could have been made distinct from the

act of intervention; but it was not necessary. The fault was not an excess of temper so much as a thoughtless or ignorant use of power. At least, that was the judgment on which this father acted. Whether he was right or wrong is not to the point; what is to the point is that he formed his judgment, acted upon it, and did not obscure the issue by confusing the consequences — or possible consequences — of a deed with its moral character.

Just as the physical consequence of a quarrel may be more important than its moral aspects, so may be its significance as an exhibition of manners. When their elders hopelessly intermingle precepts as to the amenities with deliverances upon ethics, children can hardly be blamed if they come to regard murder as in the same category with the wearing of tan boots to the accompaniment of a frock coat. An altercation marked by vulgarity, or even by nothing more than delinquen-

cies in courtesy, may be more distasteful to grown-ups than one involving meanness or deceit. In such a case we may give interference the form of an expression of disgust, and keep the issue clear. If, however, we allow it to take the form of punishment, we might as well admit to ourselves that we are engaged not in disciplining children but in relieving our own feelings, and be grateful that we have at hand such an outlet for our emotions.

Occasionally there arises a quarrel which supplies a text for a moral lesson. A quarrel of this sort arose one day between a small boy of five or six and his sister a year or two older. The mother of these two had issued a command to the younger that he take off his wet shoes. In a few minutes she heard the sound of struggle. It called for investigation. There on the nursery floor was the lad, tearful and angry; near at hand his sister, reproachful and indignant. It appeared that his neglect of the order had aroused

her to action. He resented her assumption of authority; she resented his resentment. The case was not as simple as it appeared to be. Punishment of the small boy without explanation would have seemed to him like punishment for disobedience toward a sister who was without authority. On the other hand, a rebuke of the sister for unwarranted assumption of authority would have seemed to her like a rebuke for loyalty to her mother. It was a case, not primarily for punishment or even for rebuke, but for moral instruction, or, if you prefer, explanation.

As an occasion for the doing of justice, a quarrel among children often presents great perplexities. It is hard for a mother to be a just judge between her children. This is partly because she is so practiced in partiality for her children that she revolts at the apparent hardness of impersonal fairness; partly because she frequently cannot ascertain the facts. A mother who loves justice while she loves

her children will not be quick to ascend the bench. Sometimes, however, she must. There was once called, for instance, the case of Ronald *vs.* Dan. After a statement of the case made in turn by the two litigants, and confirmed or corrected by the visiting playmate Davy, the facts seemed to be as follows: The boys were cutting advertising pictures out of newspapers. Each of the boys had his own pile of newspapers which was his property. Dan had on one of his papers a picture which he did not care for, but which Ronald cared for very much. No sooner had Ronald expressed his desire for this picture than Dan crumpled the paper up in his hand and threw it into the waste-basket. Hence the complaint. The act was undeniably one of meanness; it was done with the intent to exasperate; but it transgressed no rights. The paper was Dan's property, to be disposed of as he pleased. Ronald had not the slightest claim upon it. This was clearly under-

stood. While the trial was in progress, Davy, the witness, fished the paper out of the waste-basket, where it had become the personal property of nobody, cut out the picture, smoothed its wrinkles, and presented it to the grateful Ronald. Justice to Dan had compelled the recognition of his right to do with his own as he pleased. Judgment rendered for the defendant. Could any mother be satisfied with that outcome? So far as determining whether punishment was to be measured out, that ended the case. Strictly observing as between herself and her children their property rights, that judge could not refuse to enforce those rights as among themselves. This case, however, raised another question than that of justice.

This was the question of future amity. The generous action of Davy, the witness, made it possible to use the incident for furthering not only just but also happy relations among the children. It made the defendant somewhat ashamed of him-

self, although of course it did not in the least obscure to his mind the consciousness that the judge had dealt with him justly. It moreover restored the sun to the complainant's cloudy face. Thus at the same time it impressed on the mind of the guilty a sense of his own meanness and effaced the memory of that meanness from the mind of the aggrieved. It is not always that a judge has a Davy at hand. It will not, however, necessarily confuse matters if she act the part of Davy herself. It is sometimes possible thus to give a practical demonstration of the fact that the spoils of justice are not always satisfying.

As in walking, so in living with our fellows, some friction is necessary. To deprive a child of friction with other children is to keep him in slippery places. Unless we wish to teach him how to elude his kind, we shall not begrudge him his wholesome contests of skill, of wit, of strength, of temper. We shall only take

care that he does his fighting fairly and not on too slight a provocation, that he knows how to yield to the weakness of another, that he does not learn to whine or snivel, that he does not become a tale-bearer, that he can take defeat or rebuke without callousness and without a whimper, that he becomes capable of forgetting his resentments and his personal triumphs over others, and that of all his victories, he learns to value most those which he wins over himself.

VI

THE BEGINNING OF WISDOM

THE master of the house had returned from a visit to the country home.

"Whom do you suppose I saw to-day?"

The children could not imagine.

"Old Robert. And what do you think he said?"

The guesses flew wide.

"No; you're all wrong. What he said was, 'How are the little men?'"

Then up rose Deacon, as the old colored man had dubbed him, the youngest, blandest, tricksiest of the trio; and he laughed in derisive resentment.

"I think old Robert is funny. He calls us little men. I don't think people will like old Robert if he calls 'em names."

Names! Will children never cease to shock us by their points of view? Old Robert, like a well-baked pie, had put all

the richness of his highly flavored feeling for the lads into that one phrase. He made it serve him as a message of loyalty, respect, affection, comradeship.

Old Robert had probably never heard of James Mill; and if he had, he would not have cited him as an authority; for old Robert did not act according to the logic of his phrase. James Mill, however, did just that; he proceeded on the theory that it is wholesome to treat children as if they were miniature men and women. He began with his first-born by fitting to him an intellectual frock coat and tall hat. Why he waited till the youngster was three years old no one, so far as I know, has ever explained. Without much further delay he also gave him a religious outfit. This, though decidedly less conventional than his intellectual wardrobe, had the same adult cut. It was not the Benthamite fashion of his religious garb, but its mature lines, that gave John Stuart Mill his air of fascinating priggishness and suave conceit.

Our taste, unlike James Mill's, may be for orthodoxy. We need not on that account despair of imbuing our children with religious precocity and self-assurance. Before he was ten years old, John Stuart Mill had learned that Christianity was immoral, and that there was no personal God. There is no reason why any child at the same age may not know all the mysteries of predestinarianism, and be old in the experiences of sanctification. All we need is the diligence, the courage, the determination of James Mill.

In these qualities some of our forbears had the advantage of us. They knew very definitely what they wished their children to do and to believe. Among them was an American contemporary of James Mill, the Rev. Carlton Hurd. There are people still living who gratefully recall the ministration of this kindly, stalwart New England divine. He so ran as not uncertainly; so fought he, not as one that beateth the air. And his certitude did not forsake him

in the training of his little daughter. It may seem almost grotesque to couple the English author and employee of the East India Company with the Orthodox American parson. The one held beliefs antipodal to those of the other. James Mill, moreover, not being able to believe in a God so stern as to create this evil world, made up what was lacking in the cosmos by cultivating in himself an iron sternness toward his son; on the other hand, Parson Hurd, as he is still affectionately called, being fully persuaded of the existence of a God capable of infinite wrath, seemed to cherish in himself, as sort of compensation, a most touching solicitude for his daughter. In only one respect did Parson Hurd resemble James Mill, — in having and holding to a body of convictions which were, to his mind, not only indisputable, but also, in substance at least, essential to the proper adornment of the mind of a child. The letter in which he tells the story of Marion Lyle Hurd is

the narrative of a complete and orderly religious experience.

Marion died at the age of four years. When she was eight months old, her parents read to her from leaflets for Sabbath Schools. They explained to her, when she was a year and a half old, in answer to questions from her, the origin and use of the Bible. They noted that when she had reached the age of two "her mind was seriously exercised with religious things." At that time she would sometimes kneel down and would say: —

"Mother, I am going to pray. What shall I say to God?"

"Ask God to make you good and give you a new heart."

"What is a new heart, Mother?"

"This was familiarly explained," writes her father, "and at the same time she was particularly informed of the way of salvation by Jesus Christ, and the steps God had taken to save sinners. We endeavored to impress upon her mind that she was

a sinner and needed forgiveness; and God would forgive her sins, and give her a new heart through Jesus Christ." That from this time "she chiefly devoted her few remaining days to the acquisition of religious knowledge" her father finds to be "a consoling reflection." He adds, with conscientious caution, "If she was truly converted, we cannot tell when the change took place." Her parents hoped, however, after she had died two years later, that she had "entered 'the city of our God.'" Though they had no means of perceiving the approach of the disease of the brain which occasioned her death, they realized that the sensitiveness and activity of her mind warned them "to lead Marion with the gentlest hand; to make her way as quiet and even as possible." In this third year the books which were read to her included Parley's "Geography" and "Astronomy," Gallaudet's "Child's Book on the Soul," and "Daily Food for Christians." In her fourth year her books,

which she read to herself, were, besides the Bible, "Child's Book on Repentance," "Life of Moses," "Family Hymns," "Union Hymns," "Daily Food," "Lessons for Sabbath Schools," "Henry Milnor," Watts's "Divine Songs," "Memoir of John Mooney Mead," "Nathan W. Dickerman," Todd's "Lectures to Children," and "Pilgrim's Progress." As these titles indicate, she was "particularly fond of reading the biography of good little children." Of all her books, however, Bunyan's masterpiece seems to have been the most instructive. Her knowledge of the allegory was tested by questions. She knew why Christian went through the river while Ignorance was ferried over. She knew what was meant by the Slough of Despond and the losing of the Burden. "When we come to Christ," said she, "we" (not Christians, or people, or you, but we) "lose our sins." And she sought from her father a certificate to enter the City. "We cannot doubt," comments her

father, "Marion understood much of what was intended to be taught in that book, which Phillip says, in his life of John Bunyan, contains the essence of all theology. Certainly, she was familiar with every step of the pathway of holiness trod by Christian, from the city of Destruction through the river of death to the 'Celestial City.'" And later he adds that she evinced "a familiar acquaintance with all parts of that allegory and its doctrine." Though he makes clear in his letter that "it is not the piety of the full grown and mature christian, that we are to look for in a child," he makes equally clear that in all essential particulars her piety was complete. It included even a regard for the significance of eternal reward and penalty. From Doddridge's "Expositor," both by examining the pictures and reading "the sacred text" under the direction of her father, she derived many ideas of the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus, and the general resurrection at the end of the world.

"Marion," continues the narrative, "after closely inspecting the countenances given in those pictures, both to the just and unjust, in the resurrection, would say,

"'Oh! how the wicked look, when they rise from the dead!' adding in a serious and solemn manner,

"'"There is a dreadful hell,
And everlasting pains,
Where sinners must with devils dwell,
In darkness, fire, and chains."'"

Indeed, from the earlier months, life after death, "the happiness of the good, and the misery of the wicked," were topics of "frequent and delightful conversation with her parents."

In her last hours she expressed her assurance that she would be saved, and her last audible words were, "I am not afraid to die." Thus ended this brief life of four years and twenty-six days.

An example of such training would be hard to find among parents of the present day. This is not because there are no

parents who have Parson Hurd's convictions; neither is it because there are none who have his confidence in the capacity of children. It is because there are lacking parents who have both the convictions and the confidence. The reason why many parents fail where James Mill and Parson Hurd succeeded is that they try to make compromise between two contradictory theories. Although they wish to give their children a full complement of doctrines, they either do not possess the full complement themselves, or do not believe that their children are mature enough to receive it. The spectacle of adults attempting to instruct a primary class in the Logos Doctrine by the kindergarten method is thoroughly modern.

If the way of Parson Hurd and James Mill seems to us either too hard or unreal, there is another way that may be found. That is the studious exclusion of religion from the life — even from the knowledge — of our children. It was this way that

J. S. Mill supposed his father set him traveling. Of course he was mistaken when he said in his autobiography that he never had religious belief. He was embowered in religious, though not in Christian, or even in theistic, belief. The way that he walked was erroneously marked on his map; that was all. This is worth noting because it indicates how easily even a logician may miss this obscure way of no religion. Those who would lead their children by this route must avoid the very shadow of religion as they would that of the upas. Indeed, against even the air that has passed the shadow of religion they must quarantine their children. Religion is infectious. It can be conveyed by the subtlest means. To it children are perilously liable. Against it there seems to be no trustworthy antitoxin. Children are surrounded by infected people. A chance word may deposit the germ. One child out of the brood may thus fall a victim to a particularly virulent species of religion simply

because he never had it in a mild form. Nevertheless, it is possible to establish a quarantine that may chance to remain effective for years. By this means children may be kept from a knowledge of religion just as many are safely, or dangerously, kept from a knowledge of what most people regard as advanced physiology. One family, I am told, has taken this way. How successful it has proved, I cannot say. All I have heard is that one member of the family is now enlisted in the ministry. This does not necessarily betoken failure. The theory was simply that each child was to be kept immune until he was old enough to decide for himself whether or not he would take the infection. This way is not the way of indifference. It cannot be followed by any one who is not profoundly affected by religion, whether hostile or friendly to it. It may require less routine diligence than the other way, but it requires more anxious circumspection.

Different from either of these is that

third way blazed by the developing traits of our children. Those who take it cannot regard religion as a form of doctrines or practices to be handed over to their child ready-made; neither can they regard it as a superfluity, which they are to withdraw from their child until he can choose to avoid it as a danger or accept it as a luxury. They can regard it only as a mode of life and therefore a mode of growth. They conceive it to be quite as perfect when it is genuinely manifested in the immaturities of the boy or girl as when it is shown in the riper forms of old age.

Not that they undervalue doctrines. They know that there never was a religion that did not formulate itself. They look, however, for the doctrines to follow the religion, not the religion the doctrines. They are not surprised when they find their children constructing a philosophy of religion for themselves. Once upon a time a little girl was heard to address her dolls: "There's us, and Bridget, and Jews.

We're all made of the same material; and we all have the same Father; I guess the difference is that some are more refined than others." No grown-up could have given her in the same number of words a more thoroughly typical example of theology: a union of anthropology, biology, and metaphysics, with a quasi-ethical conclusion. No ecumenical creed could have been more valid for the generation that produced it than could this brief philosophy be for her.

Those who would take this third way well know, too, that there are some phases of religion from which it may be well, if possible, to save children for a time. It is no more necessary to feed them on Dante's "Inferno" than on Welsh rabbit. This, however, is very different from enforcing abstinence from all religious food.

Conceding as much as this, then, to dogma and to caution, those who do not object to seeing a child grow will — let him grow. They will not be surprised if he

looks out on the world with wonder. Neither will they be surprised if his wonder is slow in reaching satiety. It is sometimes very leisurely.

Davy, aged six, asked one day at table: "Mamma, what's above the clouds?"

"Air."

After a moment of thought: "What's above the air?"

"Ether."

Another moment of thought; then, "What's above the ether?"

"More ether. Ether is everywhere."

Throughout this colloquy, Davy's brother Donald, two years younger, seemed no more attentive than usual; which means he was quite inattentive. A few weeks later, Davy had occasion to tell some one the story of the Tower of Babel, and added his usual formula, "I think they were foolish to try to get up to God, for God is everywhere." Donald's mind seemed busily engaged about some other matter. A few months passed, and Donald, now

turned five, Donald the inattentive, suddenly thrust at his mother this question:—

"Is God ether?"

"No," said his mother, with a little hesitating inflection; she was trying to prepare herself for the unknown but inevitable sequence. It came promptly:—

"Is God the universe?"

Not willing to commit herself to pantheism, she answered again, "No;" and this time her inflection was more hesitant and inquiring than before.

"How can God be everywhere?"

For all those months that wonder had been nestling in that small mind until it grew brave enough to become vocal. Ether everywhere; God everywhere; God is ether. Why not? And if not, how can both be true?

"Grandfather is in the library; perhaps he can tell you."

A sound on the stairway like the roll of a drum and Donald was down in the library.

"Grandfather, how can God be everywhere?"

Grandfather touched Donald's hand: "Is Donald here, or," touching his shoulders, "is he here, or," touching his chest, "is he here, or," touching his knee, "is he here?"

Donald did not hesitate; touching each spot in turn, he answered: "Donald is here, *and* here, *and* here, *and* here."

"So it is with God," said his grandfather; "he is in New York and England and China and the sun and the moon and the stars."

With a smile that broke like the dawn, and that meant both understanding and gratitude, Donald stood thoughtfully still a moment, and then skipped off to his blocks.

Wonder. That seems to be the first phase of religious experience, and it grows silently unless it is thrust out by some grown-up body's system, or is atrophied by studious neglect. Miracles? Santa Claus? Need we trouble ourselves about these when our

children are sun-worshipers, polytheists, pagans?

Wonder is only one part of religion. The natural response to wonder is ritual. And children, whether we like it or not, are natively ritualistic. The little son of a well-known writer went with his mother for the first time in his life to service in the Church of England. As they entered, the people were singing; as the music ended, the people knelt.

"What are they going to do now, Mamma?"

"They are going to kneel and say their prayers."

"What! with all their clothes on?"

Untrained in ecclesiasticism, that small boy had developed a ritual of his own. Night-clothes, to his mind, were essential to the proprieties of religion. What does it matter to the ritualist whether or not he understands all the words he says? The ritual itself is his reaction to the spirit of reverence.

Indeed, ritual is almost a prerequisite to the spirit of reverence. It is Professor James who has said that a man does not double up his fists because he is angry, or tremble because he is afraid; he is afraid because he trembles, and is angry because he doubles up his fist. So one may say that a man does not kneel because he is reverent; he is reverent because he kneels. What power ritual has needs no further demonstration than that afforded by the Society of Friends. What ritual surpasses in power that of the Quaker meeting-house? What vestments have given color and form to character more effectually than the old-fashioned Quaker garb? If we wish our children to have the spirit of courtesy, we insist that they acquire the habit of speaking politely. If we wish them to have the spirit of reverence — there is no knowing what we shall do, for most of us are very human and irrational.

That is the reason why we shall probably be careless in considering the question of

church attendance. There are some of us, perhaps, who have the sense to give an intelligent answer to the question, Why don't you have your children go to church? There is only one rational answer to that question. It might be put into some such form as this: "I have no special objection to churches. They are useful. So are free libraries. People who have no books at home find free libraries a great benefit; but my family have at home all the books they need. So people who are not well supplied with religion derive undoubted benefit from churches; but my family have at home all the religion they need. The community would be about as well off without any churches as it is with the churches it has. If no other charity seems more important, I am willing to contribute to a church as I might to a free library; but really I see no reason why I should go to church myself, or expect my children to go." That is a rational answer. I know of no other answer essentially different

that could be called rational. An equally rational answer can be given to the other question, Why do you require your children to go to church? It might be put in these words: "A church of some kind is essential to the welfare of this community. Without any church, even the value of real estate in this place would enormously depreciate. That shows how everybody recognizes the church as a conservator of social morality. In this respect the church stands alone. The sermons may be nearly as dull as those which I have to preach to my children; the music may be even less entertaining; but the congregation represents as no other body of people the moral sense of the community. Besides that, the church is the only expression of religion as something not merely individual but also organic. Inasmuch as the church cannot be a church without a congregation, I am obliged, if I believe all this, to take my share in maintaining the existence of that congregation. And since

the responsibility for seeing that my children take their share cannot be put upon them, it rests upon me. As a consequence, they no more question why they go to church than they question why they go to meals. They are not being entertained; they are not primarily even being instructed. For that reason it is not necessary, though it may be advantageous, for them to understand the sermon. They are forming a habit. On much the same grounds I am acquainting them with the Bible. What they store in their memory now they need not understand till later. There is a time for learning by heart; there is a time for understanding. I no more propose to postpone my children's practice in religious observances until they reach the age of discretion, than I propose to postpone their practice in being honest or in learning their five-finger exercises." That answer, like the other, is rational.

A part of ritual is the observance of days and seasons. To this phase of religion we

may expect children to be sensitive. Paul's mother came into the nursery one Sunday afternoon.

"What are you doing?"

"Studying."

Paul's mother was surprised.

"We try to keep Sunday different from other days. After this we shall understand that you are not to study on Sundays."

A little more than two weeks later, Paul came home from school.

"Sammy is a funny boy," he remarked.

Sammy is a schoolmate.

"What has he done?" inquired Paul's mother.

"Why, Sammy gets his lessons on Sunday."

Two Sundays had sufficed for the establishment of a tradition in religion so complete that a violation of it seemed grotesque.

In regard to the observance of Sunday, one household has reversed the traditional rule. The ritual characteristic of that fam-

ily originated in a bachelor uncle's remark. He recalled how alluring were those books which had been forbidden him, as a boy, on Sunday, and how gray a day Sunday was because those books were proscribed. He advocated the plan of selecting certain interesting books, which would be forbidden on week-days. In other words, he would remove the ban from Sundays, and put it on the other six days. His plan was adopted. Certain delights, including several volumes of stories from the Bible, were confined to Sunday. In consequence, Bible stories are in great favor, and Sunday is a day of privilege. In that household the ritual of Sunday observance is a ritual of liberty.

Besides wonder and ritual, there is a factor in religion on which children seize. We may call it hero-worship. Others, following the lead of psychologists, might prefer to name it imitation. As the children of a certain family gather to look at Bible pictures, they are prone to ask of any

group of people depicted, "Are those people good?" Reverence for what to them is an ideal may come later than wonder or ritual, but it is sure to come in time to all children. Those parents who are ready to take their children as they are and to help the growth of the spirit as they help the growth of the body incur the peril of always seeing in this reverence a searching inquisition of their own lives. The nearest objects of hero-worship that a child has are his parents. This fact may raise a disturbing inquiry: Shall they puzzle him by setting forth two ideals of fatherhood, one incorporated in themselves, the other involved in their representation of the character of God? Shall they confuse the mind of the child by setting up two inconsistent standards of human service, their own lives and what they tell him of the life of Jesus of Nazareth? This dilemma of course is avoided by such parents as hold either of those comfortable theories, that religion is a theology and that

religion is a luxury. In the one case such questions are not pertinent; in the other they are unimportant. If, however, we understand religion to be a mode of life, we may find such questions as these driving us into an uncomfortable corner. They seem to compel us to pose as exhorter and pattern, and to force on us a paralyzing self-consciousness. Perhaps it will not harm us to be occasionally reminded of the fact that we cannot expect our children to become altogether different from what we are determined to be; but to be always composing precepts and assuming the attitude of examples seems to be but a feeble part to play. Happily, we need not confine our children to the contemplation of ourselves. There are many who, if we but let them, may share with us the burden of our children's imitativeness. And here comes our reward, if we have cultivated their imagination. We may be a bit stingy ourselves; but if we covet generosity for our children, we can let Abram make the

suggestion. We may cherish our own resentments; but if we want our children to despise theirs, we can let them join that group that heard Peter bidden to put up his sword. Whatever may happen to us in the process will probably do us no hurt. We may find another illustration of that which we encountered at the beginning, that the principal part in the training of our children is the training of ourselves. This may have meant to us, when we started on our course, that the training of ourselves was simply the preparation for the training of our children. By this time we shall have discovered that it is not so much a preparation as an outcome. This art of being a parent is an art of give and take. If it is more blessed to give, as the Lord said, it is, as far as parents are concerned, quite as obligatory to receive. As much, at least, as this is the implication in one thing that our Lord did. Whether he ever instructed a child in the faith we do not know; we have not been told.

What has been told is that when he wished to show his disciples — among them some parents, we may surmise — what religion was, he took a child and set him in the midst of them.